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## Camosy, PETER SINGER AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS: BEYOND POLARIZATION

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as this distinction does not become a forced binary, which Moser protects against, then its significance within contemporary philosophy cannot be understated.

Instead of dismissing Richard Rorty's neo-pragmatism wholesale, as several analytic and Christian philosophers do, Moser gives us a way to charitably engage with Rorty's proposal for philosophy to be reduced to "conversation." On Moser's terms, Rorty's pragmatism ironically does not put enough emphasis on the requirement for *action*. Rorty emphasizes only *talk*. Furthermore, although he is a self-described pluralist, he does not allow for a *mode of obedience* as a legitimate way to "talk" philosophy. Another point of healthy contention concerns Hilary Putnam's linguistic-centered, Wittgensteinian pragmatism that remains friendly toward both realism and theism. It focuses on *talk*, more than action, but does not police out a *mode of obedience* within philosophy—especially, his most recent publication, *Jewish Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Putnam's chapter on Martin Buber's "I-Thou" theology is all about how contemporary philosophy might work in a mode of obedience). Lastly, Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action provides a way to understand the significance of Moser's proposal. We could defend Habermas's theory, on Moser's terms, in that it includes both *action* and *talk*. However, Habermas's philosophy certainly does not turn this *action* and *talk* into a *mode of obedience*. In summary: I find Moser's last two steps in his comprehensive development of what a "Christ-shaped" philosophy looks like quite helpful for navigating the work of some of the major philosophical thinkers in our time.

*Peter Singer and Christian Ethics: Beyond Polarization*, by Charles C. Camosy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. viii + 278 pages. \$30.99.

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Camosy argues that disagreement between Singer and Christians is narrow, and that both "can work together on many important issues of ethics and public policy" (7). Before discussing their respective ethical theories, and a possible "shift" in Singer's thought, Camosy compares how these seemingly contrasting "traditions" view four practical topics: abortion, euthanasia, non-human animals, and duties to the poor. As an attempt to place different approaches to practical moral issues "in contact" with each other, the book succeeds. However, the arguments of the book fall short of bringing Singer and Christians together in any more robust sense.

Camosy offers fine surveys of the relevant literatures on the aforementioned practical topics from both Singer's work and the work of Christian



thinkers. His text is written in a clear and easily understandable style. The chapters on abortion and euthanasia nicely capture much of the relevant work within medical ethics. The chapter on non-human animals similarly captures many of the relevant points of discussion on the distinction between human and non-human animals found in environmental philosophy. These surveys and Camosy's writing style are strengths of the book, though someone familiar with bioethics or environmental philosophy will not find that much new insight is offered. Similarly, the chapter on duties to the poor is interesting and articulated well, but those familiar with Singer's work and with Catholic Social Teaching will be not find a great deal of new work here.

The absence of much new work within these traditions need not be viewed as a weakness, as the aim of the book is to bring together two traditions and to illustrate that their disagreements are narrow enough that their supporters can agree on issues of ethics and public policy. It is not surprising, however, that careful philosophical work, even if it approaches issues differently, elicits some similar practical conclusions. And it is no accident that Camosy deals with practical issues before turning to theory. A reader might worry that the respective ethical theories are articulated with the goal of reconciliation already in mind. Representative points of comparison include agreement on the consequents of many conditional claims (e.g., *if a fetus is a person, then . . .*) and agreement between teleology and utilitarianism, as both are concerned with consequences. But surely agreement on the antecedent of such a conditional is important, as is the difference between considering the consequences *among other things* and considering *only* the consequences in evaluating an action. Consider each in turn.

The argument for the narrowness of disagreement between Singer and Christians on abortion, to consider one of the practical issues taken up by Camosy, appears to rely on the claim that there are many similarities between them and only one real difference. Camosy claims that both reject "privacy centered moral neutrality," "agree that the *Roe v. Wade* approach to abortion is a mistake," and "see a logical connection between one's view of abortion and one's view of infanticide" (39). Further, both agree that the negative effects of outlawing abortion do not justify the killing of a fetus and, in fact, that there are duties to not kill (and even to support) a fetus. *But* this further agreement is dependent upon an assumption that the fetus is a person. I am wary about describing this disagreement as narrow in virtue of the aforementioned points of agreement, but even granting its narrowness, it has not been shown that the disagreement is not significant. Significant but narrow disagreement is consistent with serious and deep disagreement, as it is in this case. For many philosophers and theologians, questions of moral status and personhood are paramount, so claiming that if Singer and Christians agreed about the status of a fetus, then they would offer similar answers to a number of other questions should not lead us to the conclusion that their disagreement is not deep (even if narrow). Further, this manner of considering the disagreement is not new.

There are a number of medical ethicists who would change their view if their assessment of the moral status of a fetus changed.<sup>1</sup>

A second worry a reader might have about the account of disagreement offered by Camosy involves the classification of ethical theories. Utilitarian theories are said to be a subset of teleological theories, which are a subset of consequentialist theories. Camosy appropriately anticipates confusion and so is careful to define consequentialist theories as those “which locate a primary moral concern in the consequences of one’s actions” (182). Theories are teleological if they are “concerned with achieving an end” and utilitarian if that end is “the end of maximizing utility” (182). His taxonomy differs from the usual classification of ethical theories and this might be due to his use of the indefinite article prior to *primary* in defining consequentialism. Consequentialist theories are often thought of as having a single primary concern, whereas a teleological theory (e.g., Aristotle’s account of *eudaimonia*) takes into account consequences but not only consequences. I do not wish to quibble with definitions here, but merely to point out that how we classify theories might affect our understanding of their similarity.

My worries with the arguments offered in this book require two qualifications. First, if Singer’s view shifts significantly in the future, as Camosy suggests it might, then the disagreement between Singer and Christians might become insignificant. Second, Camosy’s claim that Christians might learn from Singer because he is consistent is instructive. This suggests that the intended audience is not academic philosophers who already strive for consistency and take Singer’s work seriously, even if we disagree, but a group hostile to Singer, who the author believes lack a basic virtue of philosophical thought. If one is interested in reconciliationist ethics, the book will prove worthwhile. If one has taken Singer and consistency seriously, the book may be of less interest.

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<sup>1</sup>Consider, for example, Mary Anne Warren’s now famous article “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion,” *Monist* 57 (1973), 43–61.

*God and the Multiverse: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Perspectives*, edited by Klaas J. Kraay. New York: Routledge, 2014. 248 pages. \$140.00 (hardback).

KIRK LOUGHEED, Monash University

This edited volume by Klaas J. Kraay brings together twelve contributions which explore different philosophical, theological, and scientific issues surrounding the multiverse. The book is helpfully divided into five main sections.

